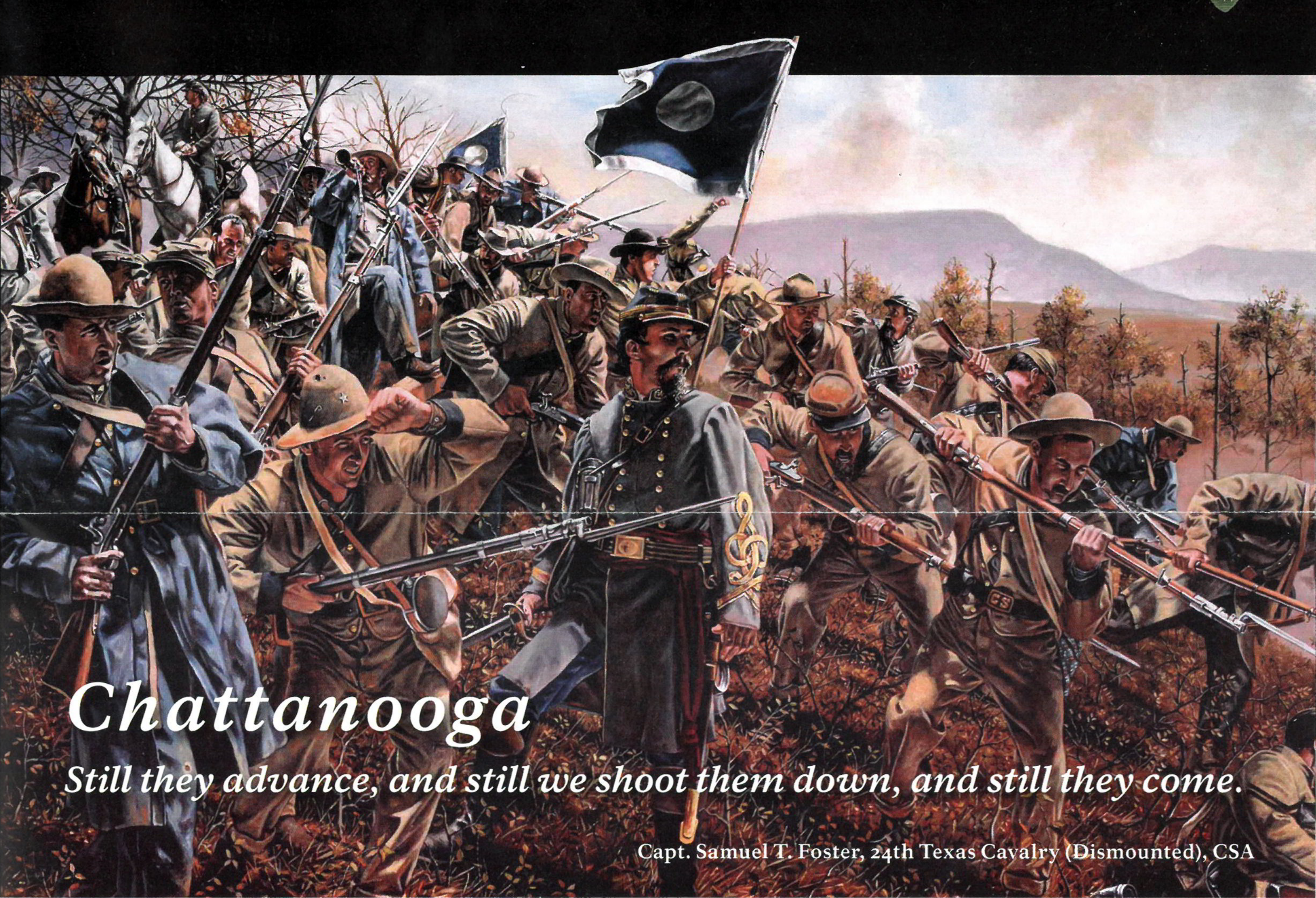


Chickamauga and Chattanooga

Chickamauga and Chattanooga
National Military Park
Georgia / Tennessee

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

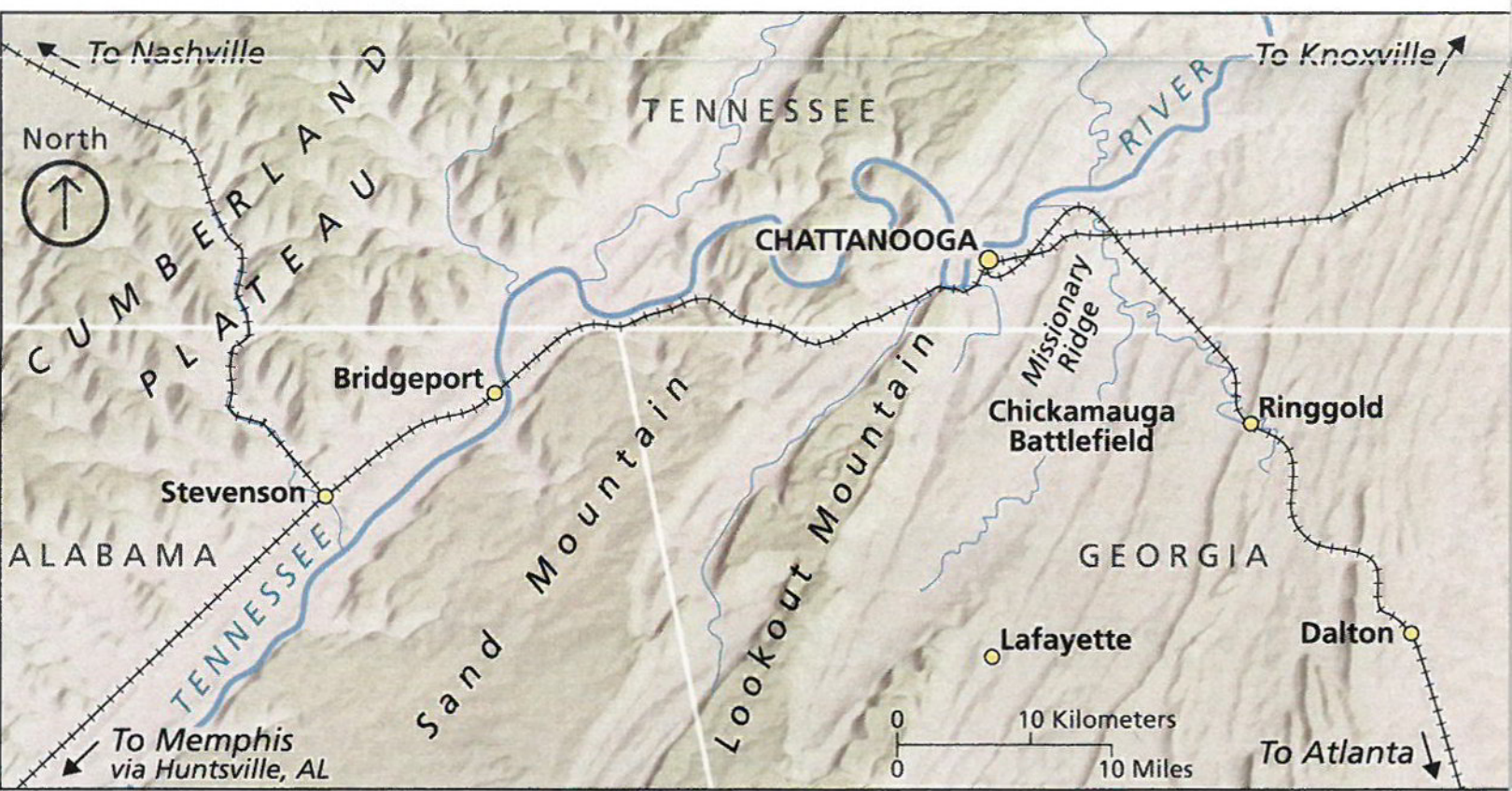


The Campaign for Chattanooga: Death Knell of the Confederacy?

President Abraham Lincoln believed that taking Chattanooga was as important as taking Richmond. Why was a small town of 2,500 as important as the capital of the Confederacy? The small city lay on the banks of the Tennessee River where it cut through the Appalachian Mountains, allowing four major railroads to converge (see map at right). If the Union captured Chattanooga, it could cripple Confederate supply lines and strike at the industrial heart of the Confederacy.

In the summer of 1863, Confederate Gen. Braxton Bragg and his Army of Tennessee controlled Chattanooga. But Union Gen. William Rosecrans skillfully moved his Army of the Cumberland south, across the Tennessee River and over Sand Mountain and Lookout Mountain, threatening the Confederates from behind. By early September, Bragg realized he had been outmaneuvered. The Confederate Army had no choice but to abandon the city and its remaining residents.

Rosecrans thought the Confederates were retreating toward Atlanta, prompting him and his army to pursue the gray-clad soldiers into Georgia. However, the Confederates had a surprise of their own. Bragg, now heavily reinforced, was not going to give up Chattanooga without a fight. At the Battle of Chickamauga, little went as planned and thousands of men lost their lives. Yet, it would be late November before the city's fate would be decided—and perhaps that of the Confederacy.



Gaining Control of the South



Armies in the western theater fought for control between the Mississippi River and the Appalachians. After Chattanooga, the western theater expanded toward the eastern theater, which centered around the Union and Confederate capitals.

1861
Western Theater
Confederates violate Kentucky's neutrality. October

1862
Confederates move to suppress Unionists in eastern Tennessee. November

1863
Union captures Fort Donelson and Fort Henry in Tennessee. February

1863
Union victories, Shiloh and Stones River, TN. April, December

1863
Union captures Vicksburg, MS. July

1863
Confederates rout Union at Chickamauga, GA and begin siege of Chattanooga, TN. Sept. 18–20

1863
Union defeats Confederacy at Chattanooga, opening way to Georgia. November 23–25

1864
Union victories, Kenesaw Mountain and Atlanta, GA. June, July

1865
Confederate Army of Tennessee surrenders in NC. April

Battle of Chickamauga

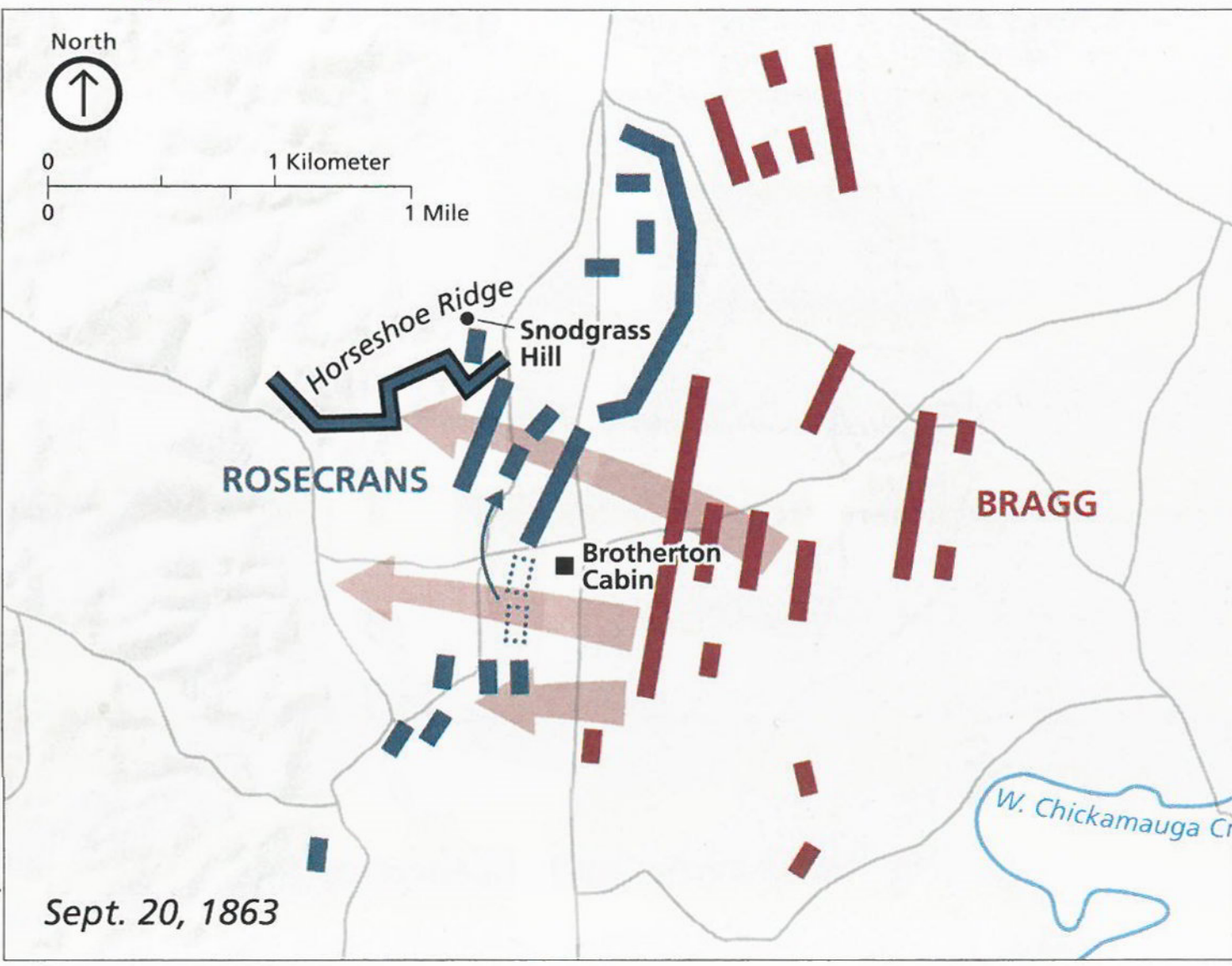
For thousands of Union and Confederate soldiers, their hopes hinge on controlling Chattanooga—the “gateway” to the Confederacy. Yet, in mid-September, they meet in the peaceful farm fields of north Georgia, along a tranquil creek named Chickamauga.

September 18

Surprise, confusion, and hard fighting replace the well-laid plans of General Bragg, who hoped to block LaFayette Road and cut the Union's route to Chattanooga. As darkness falls, Bragg is still confident he can continue his plans and stop the Union Army in the morning. However, General Rosecrans moves his troops north throughout the night, a move that could turn the tide of battle.

September 19

Early in the morning, Union troops stumble into Confederates, who they presumed to be farther south. Both sides exchange fire all morning, leaving fields and woods littered with dead and wounded soldiers. The fighting spreads southwest, yet neither side has gained a clear advantage. During the night, Confederate reinforcements arrive, while Union troops fortify their positions.



September 20

Fighting begins when Confederates attack Union fortifications on the battlefield's northern end. This forces Rosecrans to shift troops, accidentally creating a gap in the center of his line. By chance, Confederates swarm through, sweeping away Rosecrans. Retreating Union soldiers make a heroic stand on Horseshoe Ridge, but only darkness saves their army.

Siege of the City Begins

Rosecrans's army withdraws into Chattanooga while Confederates occupy key ground surrounding the city, including Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge. The stage is set to starve the Union Army into submission. They and the remaining residents endure a hungry month before General Ulysses S. Grant and reinforcements arrive to help open a supply line into the city.

Battles for Chattanooga

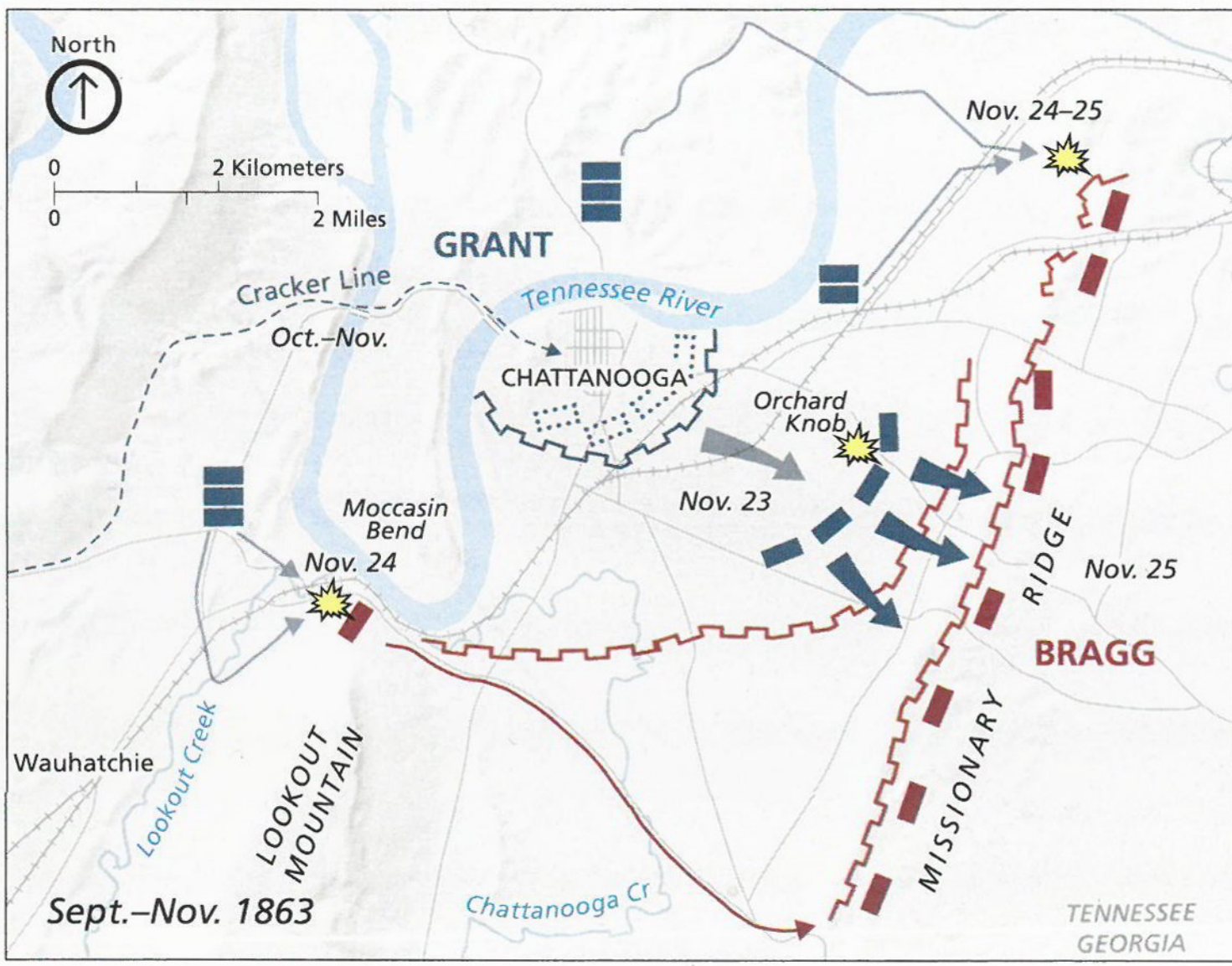
In late October, the Union uses darkness to silently float past Confederates on Lookout Mountain. Then, in a rare night battle near Wauhatchie, they win control of Lookout Valley and secure their new supply route, the “Cracker Line.” Chattanooga is still up for grabs.

November 23

Thousands of Union soldiers march out of Chattanooga. Like a great blue wave, they crash around Confederate-held Orchard Knob, a small hill between the city and Missionary Ridge. The Southerners flee, providing General Grant a strategic view of his next goal, the ridge. During the night, Bragg reinforces his line on Missionary Ridge.

November 24

The Union intends to take Missionary Ridge but mistakenly assaults a hill to the north. They discover their mistake too late to attack the ridge that day. Their diversionary tactic—attacking fog-enshrouded Lookout Mountain—becomes the famous “Battle Above the Clouds” that sweeps the Confederates off the mountain and toward Missionary Ridge.



November 25

Confederates successfully defend both ends of Missionary Ridge. Grant orders an attack against entrenchments centered at the base of the ridge. Finding little resistance there, and without orders, the recently defeated Army of the Cumberland continues charging up the rocky slopes and forces Bragg's army from the summit. Confederate troops retreat south into Georgia.

The War Continues

The rivers, rails, and roads of Chattanooga are firmly in Union hands. The city is transformed into a supply and communications base for Gen. William T. Sherman's 1864 Atlanta Campaign, which will begin in the spring. Disheartened Confederates wonder: Is the fall of Chattanooga truly “the death knell of the Confederacy”?

The Soldiers

Young men opposing one another across the battle lines fought for different reasons. Many from the North fought to preserve the Union or abolish slavery, while those from the South struggled to retain slavery or defend their homes and families. These convictions brought these soldiers here, where confusion and chaos reigned in the mountains and forests surrounding the battlefields. Often, soldiers reacted to the sights and sounds unfolding around them rather than following orders. When veterans later “suitably marked” the battle-grounds, they decided not to place monuments to generals. Instead, they honored the soldiers, whose actions decided the battles of Chickamauga and Chattanooga.



Rural Southern Farms



Taken from the Cherokee Nation in 1838, the rich lands alongside Chickamauga Creek became home to 24 families. They cleared the woods to grow crops of corn or wheat and planted rows of fruit trees. As battle loomed, the families fled before their farm fields became killing fields. Once the fighting subsided, they returned to trampled crops and fields littered with dead. Some repaired the damage and resumed farming, while others were forced to abandon their homes. Several of the families—Brotherthon, Kelly, and Snodgrass—are immortalized today on the battlefield.

Change in Chattanooga

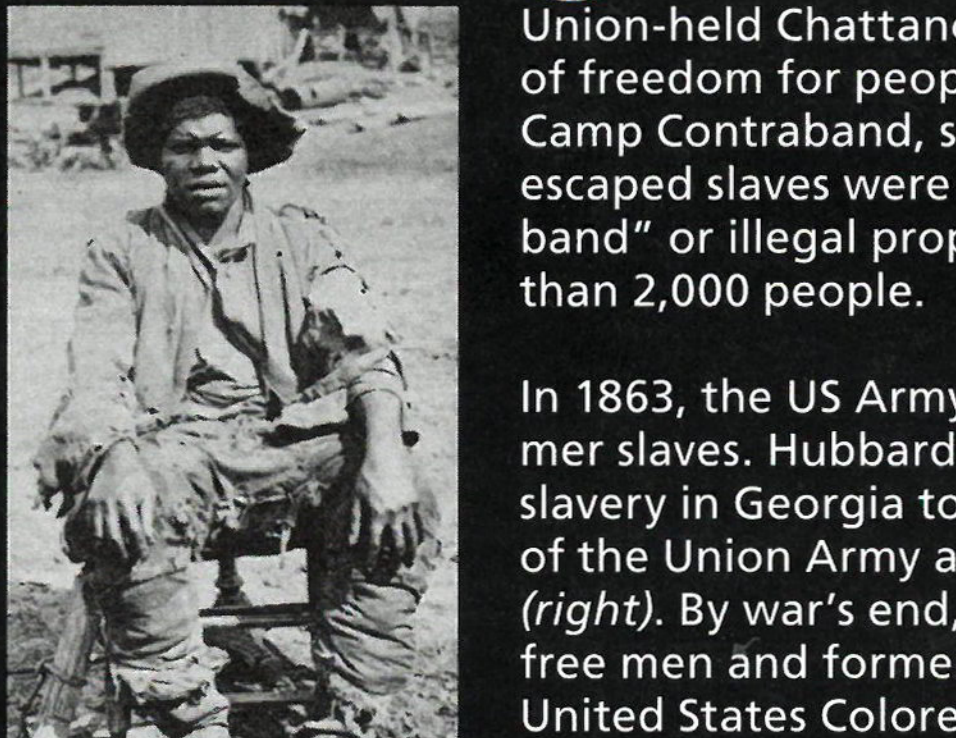


The Generals

The campaign resulted in the fall of two commanders and the rise of another. Although Confederate Gen. Braxton Bragg (near right) won at Chickamauga, he lost Chattanooga and had to resign. After abandoning his troops at Chickamauga, Union Gen. William Rosecrans (center) was removed from command. When Gen. Ulysses S. Grant arrived in Chattanooga, he took command of Union forces and replaced Rosecrans with Gen. George Thomas, whose men had gallantly held Horseshoe Ridge at Chickamauga. Grant is shown facing his staff on Roper's Rock atop Lookout Mountain (far right) shortly after the battles for Chattanooga.



Soldiering to Freedom



Union-held Chattanooga became a beacon of freedom for people escaping slavery. Camp Contraband, so named because escaped slaves were considered “contraband” or illegal property, protected more than 2,000 people.

In 1863, the US Army began recruiting former slaves. Hubbard Pryor (left), escaped slavery in Georgia to don the blue uniform of the Union Army at Camp Contraband (right). By war's end, Pryor and over 20,000 free men and former slaves had joined the United States Colored Troops.

